

THE UNITARY INTERPRETATION OF THE WORLD THROUGH YOGA
AND VEDANTA AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

It may be useful to recall the attention of the parapsychologists to the millenary interpretation of parapsychological phenomena, that was adopted by the Vedic tradition, and specifically by the highest philosophy and its consequent praxis among the Oriental philosophies: the developed Yoga on one hand, the Vedanta philosophy (from the Upanishad onward) on the other. It is a philosophy of millenary tradition and experience, that can be regarded perhaps as the deepest in the world. According to this deep insight the *siddhis*, that is, the supernatural powers, spontaneously arise as soon as the normal relations of the Ego (*aham*, *jīva*, *jīvātman*) with the Non-Ego, that is, of illusory objects with illusory subjects, are suspended, and the situation of Identity (*samatā*, *tattva*, *tathatā*, *satcitānanda*) or return to the Being, the One (*sat*, *ekatva*, *advaita*) that is obviously the true Self (*ātman*) the universal Being of all existence (*bhāva*, *jagat*) is reformed. It is similar to the Unity of Being that we experience in deep sleep (*suṣupti*) which is the same for all existence. Obviously the so-called powers are, in this perspective, no powers at all, but on the contrary a true, real renunciation of all possessiveness, or *Wille zur Macht* on the part of the personal self. It is indeed the profound experience also of the great artists — as is particularly recalled by the Indian Aesthetics of Abhinavagupta and other theoreticians like the contemporary Ananda Coomaraswami — only because genuine Art is always a song that arises by plunging into the unitary Being of the Self of all appearances and forms; the same is true of the intuition of the scientific genius as well, as of the great actions of heroes and saints that are accomplished in obedience and *pūjā* before the unitary Being of all existence. It is fundamentally the experience of a supreme and sincere Love, when one arrives, through the *bhakti* as supreme expression of *kāma* (as remarked by the true Tantric tradition) at the point of feeling oneself no longer separated from or only possessing others and other things, but just the beloved selves, the things, the universe, in the awareness of the

universal Identity of Being. *Sarvabhūtastham ātmanam, sarvabhūtāni chātmani — īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadharshanah*¹. The Liberated one «sees himself in all beings, and all beings in the Self — he sees, joined to the Yoga, all the same everywhere». Properly, he no longer sees only the things and creatures, *he is them*. Being is One, the appearances are endless, but they are One because they are the endless Being. It is thus that all impediments to the communication between the creatures disappear, and no more separation exists, because, beyond the illusory analytical distances of space and time, in the universal Self or Being (*paramātmā*, also the transcendental Ego of German Idealism) there is only the Presence, the universal, cosmic and supercosmic Consciousness, that is the Divine Existence of all, only as Being, not as perceived object.

Between me and the rose there is a difference but no diversity: we are both translations of the same harmonious Identity. In fact, duality, distinction (*bheda abheda*) multiplicity as final separated things are only thoughts: if we realize the One Being without thinking about by a living experience from inside, all separating duality vanishes: we become aware only of many various appearances of the One. It is the experience of Love: when it is made possible, joy (*ānanda*) arises.

The essence of Yoga and Vedānta is the interpretation of the world in our daily experience as playful illusion (*māyātilā*) of the multiplicity that is in itself universal Identity (*sat, samatā, kevalādvaīta* by Śaṅkara). As the multifarious colours of our visual experience are only a play of refractions of the sunlight, that is indeed at the same time sunlight and universal play of colours; as the manyfold organs and structures, tissues, cells of our body we experience them only as *one* body of unitary Life from inside, so there is no interior Identity without exterior multiplicity, no exterior multiplicity without interior Unity; because the Being of all multiplicity is One, and the One is the multiplicity itself. For the Vedānta, as for Buddhism, the world is only an immense fantasy of a pure Self (*ātman, brahman-ātman*) that is also essentially the Buddhist *śūnya* or cosmic emptiness. Because of its fundamental Unity, it appears to our minds as an extremely logical world of multiple structures.

As a consequence of being, and not only knowing or thinking, the existent forms, the apprehension of the world is no longer only a seeing (*īkṣan*) but a true clairvoyance (*darśana*) because it is no longer a bare perceiving things from outside, but a *being the things* themselves. I do not just see the girl or the tree, but I realise their Being itself, because it is essentially the same Divine Being that I am, and on the part of Being — if not on that of seeing — I am it, as I am the universe as well (*saivāhaṃ na ca dṛśyavastu iti* as it is said in the *Maṇiṣa*

1. *Bhagavadgītā*, VI, See also our Introduction to our Italian translation in the original rhythms, Ceschina, Milano, 1973.

Pañcaka of Śaṅkara: I am it and not the perceived object, *only as perceived*). Just as happens in art and in supreme Love, we can also of course perceive and feel from outside, but we are at the same time, in that peak-experience, the object, the creature as experiencing it and himself from inside as in absolute harmony with and in the universal Self or Being (*paramātman*).

A lyrical expression of this supreme vision is revealed in the verses of the hymn of Śaṅkara:

This living Light that pervades every watching,
 sleeping and deep sleeping thing,
 that Divine Presence from Brahma down to the smallest ant,
 which substantiates all beings,
That I am and am not the perceived object;
 who truly does know it,
 may be a *caṇḍāla* or a twice-born,
 surely he is a *guru*.
 I am Brahman. And all this universal Being
 is from his womb arising...².

All is selfgenerating Being (*svayambhū*) in the joyous play of variation of the universal Identity.

It is implicit in this conception of Being as non-dual, that space and time are barely projections or refractions, where no true otherness is possible. So that in the pure ecstasy or en-stasy (*samādhi*) there is properly no intuition of any far reality, but the ecstatic being *is* the immediate reality of all perceived things, near or far.

2. From the *Manishā Pañcaka* of Śaṅkara, in our own translation. See also our paper, *Due Inni di Shankara* (with Italian rythmical translation and commentary) in the florentine review, «Città di Vita», n. 6, 1976. Text and English translation in T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, *The Wisdom of Unity of Shri Shankaracharya* (with commentary), Ganesh, Madras, 1967. It results clear from this and other numberless expressions of Śaṅkara that the meaning of *Advaita Vedānta* is the One as also manifesting itself in the feast of the manifold appearances, and not only the One as negating the multiplicity, as it was opposed for instance by Rabindranath Tagore and Shri Aurobindo. As to the *siddhi* or *vibhūti* see, *Hymn to Dakṣiṇā-mūrti: siddhyet tat punar aṣṭadhā parinatam caisvaram anyāhatam*. As T. M. P. Mahadevan explains, «The fruit of Vedānta is All-Self-hood (*sarvātmatva*)». By meditating on it, by realising it it «will be achieved, again, the unimpeded super-normal power presenting itself in eight forms», *The Hymns of Śaṅkara*, Ganesh, Madras, 1970. See also of the same autor, *The Philosophy of Advaita*, Ganesh, Madras, 1957. As to the eightfold powers see, PATANJALI, *Yogasūtra (III) with the commentary of Vyāsa*, It. transl. of Corrado Pensa with Introduction, original edition Calcutta; also Rāma Prasāda, *Patanjali's Yoga Sūtra with the Commentary of Vyāsa and the gloss of Vācaspati Mishra*, Allahabad, 1910. Other Ed., *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology* by RANMURTI MISHRA, Julian Press, New York, 1963. A classic among the Western Studies on Patanjali is J. W. HAUSER, *Der Yoga, ein indischer Weg zum Selbst*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1958. See also GIULIO COGNI, *Il momento parapsicologico nello Yoga della Bhagavadgītā e in Patanjali*, Rass. It. di Ricerca Psichica, Roma, 1973-74. The It. Ed. of Corrado Pensa is edited by Boringhieri, To-

Adequately integrated with the intuition of interiority that goes beyond all experimental apprehension of the physical existence of the world, this conception could be considered as just identical with the manner of considering reality in the field of modern science: all is ultimately energy and transformation of energy. One must add that this energy does not need, in the first instance, waves to communicate with itself. If the particular selves (*jīvas*) need waves for their normal communication, because of their separateness, as soon as they realise the illusion of the singleness (« This ignorance that arises from the three *guna* is superstructure of *māyā* », Śaṅkara) they return into the womb of the Unique Presence; to the *paramātman*, the universal *brahman-ātman*.

rino, 1962. For the classic tradition: J. VARENNE, *Le Yoga et la tradition hindoue*, Paris, 1973; J. VARENNE, *Upanishads du Yoga*, Paris, 1971. *Upanishad*, a cura di CARLO DELLA CASA, UTET, Torino, 1976. As to the Buddhist Yoga and to Tantras, MIRCEA ELIADE, *Techniques du Yoga*, Paris, Gallimard, 1952; ch. IV, H. V. GÜNTHER, *The tantric View of Life*, Shambal, London, 1972; HELMUT VON GLASENAPP, *Buddhistische Mysterien*, Speemann, Stuttgart, 1940; W. Y. EVANS-WENTZ, *Tibetan Yoga and secret Doctrines*, Oxford University Press, London, 1935. For the connection of Buddhism with the Vedānta, KAMALESWAR BHATTACHARYA, *L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme ancien*, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris, 1973. For a most comprehensive view, EDWARD CONZE, *The Buddhism*, Oxford, 1951, french transl., *Le Bouddhisme dans son essence et son développement*, transl. Marie-Simone Renou, Payot, Paris, 1971. OSCAR BOTTO, *Buddha e il Buddhismo*, Ed. Esperienze, 1974. For a short insight, MARIO BUSSAGLI, *Che cosa ha veramente detto il Buddha*, Ubaldini, Roma, 1968. On Tantra, the classic works of ARTHUR AVALON, *The Serpent Power, Shakti and Shakta, The Great Liberation* (or *Mahānirvāna Tantra*), all ed. by Ganesh, Madras. JULIUS EVOLA, *Lo Yoga della Potenza*, Ed. mediterranea, Roma, 1968. Further, *Haṭhayoga-Pradīpikā*, Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, New Delhi (it. transl. ed. Savitry, Turin). *Yoga Vāsisṭha*, interpr. by Swami Venkatesananda, Cape Province, S. Afrika, *Gheranda Samhita*; *Shiva Samhita* O. B. Rep. Corp., New Delhi.

As to the concept of art in Indian Tradition, see *Indian Aesthetics and Art Activity*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1968, with contributions of N. V. Banerjee, Shyamala Sharma, Ajit Mookherjee, K. Krishnamoorti, R. K. Sen a.s.o. For Abhinavagupta, RANIERO GNOLI, *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*, Serie Orientale, Roma, 1956 and Benares, Chawkhamba, 1968. Gnoli has edited with Italian Translation, *Tantrasāra*, Boringhieri, Torino, and *Tantrāloka*, Utet, Torino, 1972 (*Essenza dei Tantra* and *Luce delle Sacre Scritture*). Of Ananda Coomaraswamy, particularly, *The transformation of Nature in Art*, Dover Publ., New York, 1976, and also *Hinduism and Buddhism*, both transl. into It. by Rusconi, Milano. See also *Indian Aesthetic* by K. C. PANDEY, in S. RADHAKRISHNAN, *History of philosophy eastern and western*, Allen, London, 1952; also It. transl. by Feltrinelli, Milano, 1967.

For Śaṅkara, the unique Italian biographical and comprehensive work is MARIO PIANTELLI, *Śaṅkara*, Ed. Esperienze, 1974. As to the meaning of the Advaita Vedānta, see also, apart from his *Indian Philosophy*, II/VIII, Allen, London, what Radhakrishnan is telling in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, III/IX, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1940, also It. transl. by Bompiani, 1966.

For the question of *Being* is now very important, ERICH FROMM, *To Have or to Be?*, Harper & Row Publ., New York, 1976, after the former of GABRIEL MARCEL, *Être ou Avoir?*, F. Aubier, Paris, 1935; also It. transl. respect. by Mondadori, 1977, and Abete, Roma, 1966. See also GIULIO COGNI, *La realtà dell'Essere*, Esp., Milano, 1976; by the same a., *La conoscenza indiana per immedesimazione*, « Città di Vita », Firenze, 1975.

The parapsychological phenomena are in this context only the consequences of overcoming the illusion of separative multiplicity between creatures and things. It is necessary for that — but just there lies the big difficulty for the ordinary man — to realise the universal Self, or non-Ego at all, by experiencing oneself and reality not as an object of thought, but simply as Being. It was called subconscious by Western psychologists; but it is not indeed something, that is on this side of consciousness; it is the universal superconscious Presence, that is both sub / and supermind (Aurobindo) and also mind as well, as simply all-pervading Presence or One. At least, if consciousness arises in myself, who am made out of food, how would it be possible to conceive that this consciousness would not have been potentially there in my food, as well as in all perceived things, as it is potentially there in my sleeping body?

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From such universal principles of the vision of the world in the Yoga and Vedānta, a multitude of consequences could arise.

The first, as it is told in the sacred books, is the real possibility of telepathy and clairvoyance in all possible extensions. If I could go back to the Being itself, and become what I essentially am, which is the Being, it is clear that Being is everywhere and for ever. I will be no more myself, but the Being itself; man or animal or vegetable existence, all is in itself Being; and it is essentially the same everywhere: so that telepathy and clairvoyance can happen to men, animals, vegetables all the same, as consequence of the omnipresence of all. But just as happens to the artist, who contemplates reality as dynamic, selfcreating forms, things normally appear to the clairvoyant feeling as illuminated and engendered from inside. It is indeed this vision of universal Being as Identity that reveals itself in the great genuine works, and also constitutes the liberating power of art.

Another consequence is that some flashes of clairvoyance or telepathy or also physical powers can arise in every creature, because all creatures are fundamentally the Being. The more one forgets oneself by merging into the Being and dissolving the illusion of egoism, the more the powers of the *Yogasūtras* arise as well, as a consequence of a well founded saintliness and renunciation to the illusion of a merely personal being.

But the traditional culture of the Hindu-philosophy rigorously insists on the danger of these powers (*siddhis*) for the common man and also the illuminated one, because of their ever possible provocation (Ego is not totally extinguished even by the greatest saint) to the morbid search for prominence and personal power. To seek these, to cherish them is a sign of egoism, that arises especially by so called mediums, since they are only incidentally endowed with such possibilities because of their morbid nature; they become easily proud of them, and conse-

quently either lose later their « powers » or they alternate between moments of foolish egoism and genuine moments of forgetting of self. The same danger does exist for everyone, even for the *guru* or the scholar. « Such a searching for occult powers is looked upon with disfavour for the most part by spiritual teacher in India, because it belongs to inferior planes and usually pushes the seeker on a path which may lead him very far from the divine... ». Much more: « The meaning is that the intercommunication, that already exists at the level of the unconscious, does not signify in itself a true liberation from the impulses of some subhuman chaos of egoistic instincts and desires »³.

Another consequence is that what normally is considered as the paramount phenomenon — the mediumistic performance — and emerges as a marvellous or strange happening in the ordinary trend of life, is in itself perhaps no more clairvoyant than the great vision of genius in philosophy or in art; so that a very musical revelation like some page of the Wagnerian *Nibelungenring*, could be considered, perhaps, as clairvoyant of the biggest prophecies of history; and a great number of great novels could also be acknowledged as true works of clairvoyant insight. Such stories tell outlines of life of some period of terrestrial history; but their outlines are normally the same as those of some diviners, who tell us what could happen in the future according to the living logic of all things becoming, contemplated in their universality. They never tell the exact date or the exact place of the future happening: they forecast to us only the fatal happening of the Divine Being in the play of the world. This may explain the troubling phenomenon of the so-called precognition much better than some strange theory on the inexistence of Time, or predisposed immobility of all things where we would only perform a strange journey through Space! Fatality would result for the unitary insight into the One Being as the logic of Being itself, exactly as in the physics. Physic and psychic are for a final insight not necessarily predetermined, but selfdetermined (*svayambhū*), because Being is not a dead object, but Selfexisting and Selfengendering in Itself.

Another consequence is that these powers are not powers of man, but only of the Being, that is, of Brahman-Ātman, of God. They are just the dissolution of the personal Being, as in art and love. All egoism of artists and mediums, all proudness of them, is only an human obstacle for their performances; the biggest of them are indeed free from such sins, at least for the major part of their lives.

For one of the most famous clairvoyants of today, Gustavo Adolfo Rol of Turin, « every thing has its 'soul' »: he does not trust spiri-

3. Quoted from « Bhavan Journal », Bombay, 16-1-1977. See also SHRI AUROBINDO, *The Life Divine*, Ch. XXVII, XXVIII; *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Ch. XXIV; *The Supramental Sense*, Ed. of the Centenary, Pondicherry, 1972, the former also in It. transl. by Ubaldini, Ed. Roma. See also GIULIO COGNI, *La Parapsicologia in Shri Aurobindo*, Rass. It. di Ricerca Psichica, Roma, 1972.

tualism, that tell us of insulated souls beyond all terrestriety: he realises the Presence everywhere, « in a stone, a leaf, a thing, also in the apparently lifeless things »⁴. As Apa B. Pant once declared, the true Yogi « pours his 'self', him 'self', into every thing, a stone, a tree, an old man, a young child, a dead body, a bird, a cloud, even into a sound, a whisper, into rain, floods, disease, joy — everything is thus, not *apart* from himself, in tension or conflict with himself, but *is* his-own-self »⁵.

So, the true Yogi is no more himself, but the universal Being in all beings. He could give his own body as food to all creatures, as it is told of some incarnations of Buddha, and experience, by this feeling « equal » in all, the supreme joy (*ānanda*).

As for the phenomena, they are in themselves only direct manifestations of the Being; that could appear beyond the illusion of ordinary limitation and determinism. The good medium is, in this sense, only an instrument of Being, which doesn't operate, as ordinary man, as an impediment to the possibilities of Being, by intervening with his own Ego. « These supernormal powers are not considered by the Yoga philosophy to be miraculous interferences with the laws of nature ». The interferences are, much more, originated by the limitations of our little egos, with their superstitious concepts of the limited nature. « What appears to be a contravention of the physical world is only a supplementing of it by the principles of another part of the cosmic order... The attractions of unlimited physical and intellectual power were perhaps employed to induce the worldly to take to the higher life. The foolish always seek after signs » (Radhakrishnan)⁶.

That means finally, that parapsychological research is not irrelevant but perhaps a true search for revelations of the Divine Being, if it is not employed only as experimental curiosity or for the search of new powers of man, in order to augment his *Wille zur Macht* and egoism. It would only be necessary for the science to make contact with the deeper insight of the Orient, that can furnish the most logical explanation of phenomena, which, if only considered in the normal panorama of pure physical objectivity from outside, could never reveal their true nature. It is the nature of the *Essentia* and not of the *Apparentia Mundi*. They are signs of the Unity or Oneness of Being — *satya, tattva, advaita* — revelations, as it were, for the common man of every time, but specially for our godless times, of the Divine *Sat* of Existence.

4. « Gente », Milano, 5-12-1977. On Rol see LEO TALAMONTI, *Gente di Frontiera*, Milano, Mondadori, 1975, and the former, *Universo Proibito*, Mondadori, Milano, 1966; MASSIMO INARDI, *Dimensioni Sconosciute*, Milano, Sugar.

5. APA B. PANT, *The Mind of Man*, a lecture held at Florence, now printed in *Surya Namaskars*, Sangam Books of Orient Longman, Bombay.

6. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN, *Indian Philosophy*, II/VIII, quoted above.

N.B. - This paper aims to be only an introductory point of departure for the study of the problems. It deserves to be continued by a scientific and particular exposition of the most important statements of the literature on Yoga, Vedānta and Buddhism, principally in the fields of Yoga and Tantra; the foundation remains logically the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara, or, *mutatis mutandis*, of Mahāyāna Buddhism; outside of them it is easy to fall into empirical or mytological views, that could be also true in their symbolical limits, but also divert into superstitious believes and concepts, that are also to find not only by religious faiths or ancient science, but also by modern scientific approaches, that are equally valid in themselves as partial, but not as final conclusions, as they are normally accepted.

The fact that the expression of what is experienced from inside can only be symbolic — just as we would interpret verbally what happens in our body without knowing any scientific anatomy — is quite normal. It is the same as in the Art: a lyrical expression of a reality, that is not the same as it appears from outside to our senses or intellect. Symbol means obviously some possible vision or objectivation, but only as lyrical expression in the Unity of Being. This is surely a difficulty for scientific inquiring of the reliability of phenomena. 24 can become 42 and so on. But the true point of control lays in the essentiality of the expression, in its correspondence with the gist of the thing, as in the Art.

The argument is obviously presupposed by the Vedānta, whose philosophy and science is also intuition and poetry.

7. For a general view of the parapsychological problems by the author before his awareness of Indian thought, see GIULIO COGNI, *The Unity of Nature*, in *Does Man survive Death?*, ed. by R. Garrett, Helix Press, New York, 1957.